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Keeping up with Carthage: Utica's Urban Centre from Augustus to the Antonines

Imed Ben Jerbania, J. Andrew Dufton, Elizabeth Fentress, Ben Russell

Since 2010 a team from the University of Oxford and the Institut National du Patrimoine, has been investigating the monumental centre of Utica, located on the tip of the promontory on which the city is built (fig. 1).¹ The range and scale of architectural elements littering this area were remarked upon by most antiquarian investigators of the site. Nathan Davis, working at the site in 1858, notes that despite the fact that it ‘had been ransacked for building materials’ this part of the city was covered with ‘marble and granite shafts, capitals, and cornices, of every order, size, and dimension.’² Alfred Daux even observes that the local residents of the region referred to the largest building of the zone as the ‘Dar Es Sultan’ — the Palace of the Sultan — such was its magnificence.³ Aerial photographs commissioned by Alexandre Lézine in 1954 (fig. 2) show the area at the head of the promontory almost completely robbed out during and immediately after the Second World War: it now has a rather desolate aspect, and some of the reconstruction presented here remains highly hypothetical.

The new excavations have, however, provided enough evidence to present what seems to be a coherent sequence for the monumental centre, a sequence which began in the Augustan period or slightly earlier and was then radically redeveloped under Hadrian and into the Antonine period. In this article we summarize previous scholarly interpretations of Utica’s monumental core before outlining how recent work at the site has identified a new monument to the north, shed further light on the extent and nature of the earliest forum, and provided a more concrete identification and phasing for the two largest buildings occupying the bulk of this area — namely a new sanctuary complex, here tentatively identified as a Traianeum, and a basilica, both constructed in the 2nd c. A.D. As central Utica was transformed, public spaces were converted and new monuments constructed on a case-by-case basis, often disregarding earlier structures or alignments and increasingly looking toward the expanding city to the south. One constant, however, is the connection between Utica and nearby Carthage. One of the most important cities in North Africa, Utica’s monumental development was closely interwoven

¹ The project is directed by Imed Ben Jerbania, Josephine Crawley-Quinn, Elizabeth Fentress, Faouzi Ghozzi and Andrew Wilson.

² Davis 1861, 510.

³ Daux 1869, 260-2; Lézine 1968, 90-1.

with imperial policy and responded, at least in part, to a desire to keep up with building activity at its more famous neighbor.

20th c. Excavations and Lézine's Early Forum

Antiquarian interest at Utica was relatively modest, and the results of these early expeditions were always presented in the shadow of neighboring Carthage; even in the history of archaeological discovery, Utica might be excused for developing an inferiority complex. While important finds were made at the site, such as the uncovering of the basilica (on which more below) by the Italian count Camillo Borgia in 1816-1817, the overall topography of the site remained unclear.⁴ Indeed, certain erroneous observations about the site proved surprisingly persistent. In particular, the northern tip of the promontory — long associated with the earliest occupation of the town — was initially understood as an island, separated from the mainland by a narrow canal represented by a pronounced hollow in the modern topography.⁵ This misidentification continued into the 20th c., even as this area saw the beginnings of more structured archaeological research. In the 1920's Moulard sketched the 'island', showing it covered with granite columns, with a large temple immediately to the north, but none of the results Borgia's excavations in the area are noted.⁶

The first systematic excavations of the area were begun by Pierre Cintas in the 1950s, and were aimed primarily at the Punic necropoleis of the site. Cintas focussed first on the necropolis under Insula III, also opening a number of sondages across the areas of later Roman occupation on either side of the depression separating the tip of the promontory from the mainland.⁷ On the southern edge of the 'island', Cintas concentrated explicitly on the necropolis below the later Roman monuments and opened a large excavation area oriented roughly east-west; a long, narrow trench extended over 20 m to the north, most likely searching (unsuccessfully) for further evidence of burials (see fig. 12 below).⁸

Despite the importance of this northern area of the site from the earliest phase of the settlement onwards, accounts up to the mid 20th c. thus provide only superficial and often contradictory

⁴ On Borgia's excavations in the basilica, see Lund 2000.

⁵ E.g. Daux 1969; Hérissou 1881, 15–7.

⁶ Moulard 1924, 141.

⁷ Cintas 1951.

⁸ Colozier (1952; 1954) provides a preliminary publication of the burials in this area, with a more complete catalogue provided by Cintas (1954).

descriptions of its archaeological remains.⁹ It is not until the comprehensive investigation by the architect Alexandre Lézine that the monumental centre of Utica is given anything approaching a comprehensive coverage.¹⁰ Lézine's sondages and analyses, coupled with his synthesis of the earlier works of Cintas and others, created a coherent history of the city's monumental development that remains the basis for all subsequent study. It is thus worth summarizing his conclusions here, insofar as they refer to the area we studied (fig. 3).

First, Lézine identified a monumental porticoed avenue along the long depression that separates the body of the Roman town to the south from the northern area at the tip of the peninsula.¹¹ Early accounts of the site consistently misinterpreted this topographic feature as a channel, leading to the lasting codification of the 'island' and the mainland to the south.¹² In contrast, Lézine's identification of this hollow as a street was accurate, at least for the Roman period: the bedrock beneath lies too high to have ever been flooded.¹³

The area to the north of the avenue was dominated by an rectangular open area, 'Place N', and the remains of a large building, 'Monument G'; both were correctly identified by Lézine as 2nd c. A.D. interventions reshaping the core of the town. Lézine also speculated on the presence of an earlier forum, spatially defined by a number of structures surviving through these later construction projects, and this description remains our best account of the earliest public spaces of the Roman town.

The highest standing structure in the area is Lézine's 'Temple A'. This temple had a high podium and was approached by a staircase from its eastern side. While the lower courses of the substantial façade survive, as do the projecting side walls for the staircase, everything to the west was removed by robbing activity in the 20th c.¹⁴ The main wall comprises 6 large ashlar piers joined by mortared small blockwork and would originally have supported the hexastyle façade of the temple; the temple was probably prostyle considering the height of its podium and measured 19.65 m along its front, roughly equivalent to 60 Utican feet (of 32.6 cm).¹⁵

⁹ Lézine 1968, 91.

¹⁰ Lézine 1968.

¹¹ Lézine 1968, 83–6.

¹² Lézine takes particular issue with the plan of Daux (1869, reproduced in Lézine 1970), which records a walled canal and small man-made harbor in the place of the later Roman street.

¹³ Lézine built here upon the work of Cintas, who also completed a sondage in the depression between the 'island' and the mainland and first identified the existence of paving and shopfronts (Cintas 1951, 76–7).

¹⁴ Lézine 1968, 91.

¹⁵ Lézine 1968, 94. Lézine proposes a Utican foot measuring 32.6 cm — after the Doric foot — was consistently used across the site (1968, 85). This measurement works well in the case of the 'Temple A'. In other cases,

Lézine noted preserved Punic surfaces within the podium of this temple that were significantly higher — some 2 m — than the later Roman structures to the east.¹⁶ This suggests that the Punic ground surface was razed to the east of ‘Temple A’ at the time of its construction in order to create a large flat space in the area where ‘Monument G’ was later built. The various cisterns we find preserved in this area were also razed, and suppose original Punic floors significantly higher than the later Roman levels. An enormous quantity of earth and numerous structures must therefore have been removed, taking the Punic stratigraphy down to 4th c. B.C. levels in order to create a flat plaza over which ‘Temple A’ loomed. Lézine argued that this open space constituted the *forum primitif* of Roman Utica.¹⁷

At the east end of this early forum, and perhaps representing a continuation of it, was an open space flanked at least along its northern side by a portico. This space, ‘Place J’, survived the later construction of ‘Monument G’. Traces of the north portico were identified by Lézine and comprised column drums (52 cm in diameter) of stuccoed sandstone and Tuscan capitals.¹⁸ Opening onto this portico, perhaps via a colonnade, was a roughly square exedra (‘H’ on Lézine’s plan), approximately 11.1 m x 11.1 m. The walls of this exedra and the back wall of the portico running eastwards from it were constructed in panels of *opus reticulatum* set between sandstone piers; pin holes in the surface of these walls and traces of mortar show that they were revetted in marble. The floor of the exedra was also decorated with *opus sectile*. Although the back walls of the portico and the exedra later acted as terrace walls, as Lézine noted, they were built with two faces, indicating either that earth was removed from behind them during construction and then replaced, or that they initially had rooms behind them. The exedra certainly had original doors in its eastern and western walls, which Lézine did not note. Although the western wall has been largely removed, the robbing activity has left a mortar surface corresponding to a doorway in place. In the eastern wall, the doorway was later blocked in by an ashlar wall, but a preserved panel of marble revetment shows that the passage leading through this doorway was decorated similarly to the main exedra; indeed this doorway probably

however, we suggest the use of the Roman foot (29.6 cm; used both for the monumental avenue and the Traianeum and basilica, below) and Punic cubit (51 cm; used for the insulae to the south of the original Punic settlement) are more likely. This discrepancy of measurement units corresponds to chronological differences between these projects, and also perhaps to the diverse groups of surveyors and craftsmen involved in construction at the site throughout its history.

¹⁶ Lézine 1968, 103.

¹⁷ Lézine 1968, 106

¹⁸ Lézine 1968, 100.

led to a staircase communicating with higher level to the east, to judge from the remains of walls preserved on the surface in this area.

Along its eastern end 'Place J' was separated from a large elite house, the 'Maison du Grand Oecus', by a covered gallery, perhaps an arcaded cryptoporticus, although it is also possible that the northern portico turned southwards to run along this side of 'Place J'.¹⁹ The exact formulation of the southern edge of 'Place J' is obscured by a row of shops added after the construction of 'Monument G', though it is possible that these shops followed the line of a southern portico, suggesting a U-shaped colonnade around the space.

One final feature that seems to relate to this first phase of the early forum is a semi-circular exedra in the north-western corner of the space, close to the north-eastern corner of 'Temple A'. Lézine called this structure 'Exédre F' and identified it as a basin or fountain.²⁰ It is built at the same height as the rest of the early features in this area but is so close to the north-western corner of the later 'Monument G' that it makes more sense as an earlier ornament on the northern edge of the early forum.

Lézine is unclear regarding the precise chronology of the early monumentalization of this space. He noted that 'Temple A' is not oriented to anything else in the Roman city and thus suggested that it occupied the location of an earlier temple, to which he attributed some of the blocks built into the staircase; this transformation of the temple he places in the mid 1st c. B.C. Exactly when the terracing in front of the temple occurred is not clear, but Lézine regarded the further development of the early forum as taking place from this point through to the 1st c. A.D., with the subsequent additions of 'Place N' and 'Monument G' at some point in the 2nd c. A.D.²¹ Our recent fieldwork sheds a new light on the picture first outlined by Lézine, providing details of both the areas to the north and south of the early forum as well as a more complete description of the monumental projects that reshaped the city from the Hadrianic period.

The Monumental Centre by the Augustan Period

¹⁹ 'Maison du Grand Oecus' was first investigated by Veyne (1961-62) and mentioned only briefly by Lézine (1968, 101). It was subsequently excavated almost in its entirety and given a more complete publication treatment by Margaret Alexander and Mongi Ennaïfer as part of the *Corpus des Mosaïques de Tunisie* (see Dulière 1974).

²⁰ Lézine 1968, 102.

²¹ Lézine 1968, 106.

The INP excavations to the north of the early forum

To the evidence adduced by Lézine for the earliest version of the forum we can now add some more concrete details. The first of these comes from a large building to the north of this central complex, excavated by Imed Ben Jerbania with the INP, which is labelled P on fig. 13. Among the excavations carried out in this part on the northern tip of the site, those of Taoufik Rdissi of 2004-2005 revealed a large building in a sort of depression flanked to the south by the area of Lézine's 'Monument G', to the west by a tall monument interpreted by Lézine as colonnaded,²² and to the east by the hill that occupies the north-eastern part of the promontory. As these results have never been published, the completion of the excavation seemed fundamental for the understanding of the monument and its relationship to the other early Roman structures on the site.

In the context of the INP-Oxford collaboration, which included a geophysical survey of the entire site a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey of the area around Rdissi's excavation was carried out in 2010 and 2012 by a team from the British School at Rome and the University of Southampton. The area to the south of the excavation as far as the remains of 'Monument G' was covered, giving excellent results that showed alignments which prolonged towards the south the walls found by Rdissi (fig. 4). These were apparently shallow and defined the large spaces of a monumental building.

In the light of these results a trench measuring 22 x 8 m was laid out, using as its southern edge the limit of the building shown by the GPR. The plan of the building corresponded closely to that shown by the geophysics. In most cases the walls were constructed directly on the bedrock or natural soil, but in the western part of the excavation mud-brick walls with some pebble construction, built directly on the natural soil or bedrock emerged (fig. 5). These were laid out on a different orientation and belong to the first Phoenician phase of the site.²³ Evidently the Roman structure was constructed after a massive terracing operation that removed all of the stratigraphy later than the 8th c. B.C., taking some of the area down below natural. Another razing marked the end of the Roman monument. We have no trace of further building on the

²² Lézine 1970, 18-19, fig. 6.

²³ For the early Phoenician stratigraphy of this site, its construction techniques and dating, see Ben Jerbania 2017, 181-82.

site, so it is unclear how the area was then used. Although much remains to be done to confirm the whole of the plan of the building, it seems appropriate to present it in this context.

All of the walls found in the new excavation are built in the same technique and constitute the foundations for a major building. The lower parts of the foundation walls are built of regular courses of differently sized blocks, sometimes including *spolia* from earlier buildings. These are bonded with an earth mortar. The upper parts of the foundations, where they are preserved consist of ashlar masonry in a shelly sandstone, with some flatter stones intended to provide a levelling course (fig. 6). Almost all of these foundations are 0.85 m wide, and are cut into the natural soil. No contemporary floor surfaces are preserved except in the south-west corner, where we find a fragment of an *opus signinum* pavement into which is set a dense *semis* of white tesserae (fig. 7).

The general alignment of this building is north-northeast/south-southwest (fig. 8). The north-south walls all abut the south wall, outside of which runs a well-built channel in masonry, currently 0.52 m deep, which continues to the east beyond the building. The southern wall incorporates an earlier well at its western end. Overlapping the south wall on its north side is found the aforementioned *signinum* fragment. It appears that it lay inside a robbed threshold, which would provide us with one of the entrances to the building. Toward the eastern end of the south wall two large blocks might indicate a symmetrical entrance on that side. The walls inside the building are all built in the same technique, and define the internal spaces: the GPR shows that they certainly connected to those of the earlier sondage. These walls seem to define a courtyard, flanked to the east by a triple line of walls, perhaps a portico flanking a row of rooms. To the west we have as yet no evidence for a symmetrical arrangement. In the northern half of the courtyard is found a rectangular structure twice as long as it is wide.

The date of the monument is based on the fill of a well that was put out of use at the time of the terracing of the site, in preparation for the new building. The excavation of this well reached a depth of 2.30 m and revealed a pottery context that is sufficiently coherent that it is worth presenting in full.

The material comprises a range of forms and productions (fig. 9). The amphorae are divided between Punic-tradition and Italic groups. Two examples (no. 1-2) correspond to the family of containers of the type Mana C2b. The rim no. 3 can be considered an ovoid amphora of the

‘africaines anciennes’ type.²⁴ The Italic group is dominated by Dressel 1A amphorae (no. 4-6). Imported Black Glaze pottery includes late forms of Campanian A, notably the bowls Lamb. 31 (no. 7-8), but also bowls in Campanian B, those of Calès, of the form Lamb. 1 (no. 9-10). Finally, the bowl no. 11 is in the fine grey Campanian C ware, related to type Lamb. 19. Thin-walled wares are represented by a few fragments belonging for the most part to Mayet type 2 (no. 12). Plain wares include the fluted wall of a basin (no. 13) as well as the kantharos with two vertical handles (no. 14). This latter, of Lancel type 371/372, was already attested at Carthage in levels of the first half of the 2nd c. B.C.²⁵ However, our example is characterized by the junction of the top of the handle with the rim. A casserole with a horizontal rim and an internal ridge designed to hold a lid is of italic production (no. 15). Finally, the two Black Glaze lamps with an elaborate décor of vegetable motifs in relief are late-Republican types. The first is a Dressel 1A (no. 16), the second Dressel 1B (no. 17). Both are dated to the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 1st c. B.C.²⁶

The context from the well thus presents a facies that is typical of the end of the 2nd or the beginning of the 1st c. B.C. The presence of late forms of Campanian A in association with those of Campanian B and C, as well as the late-Republican lamps allow us to date the whole to the first quarter of the 1st c. B.C.²⁷ This is a date which would also fit the *signinum* pavement.

The abandonment is dated by the multiple materials from the robber trenches of the building, which seem to have been dug around the middle of the 2nd c. A.D. As we will see, this date that would correspond well with the construction of Lézine’s ‘Monument G’ to the south, and the razing of our building may have been intended to create a new open space to the north of this later structure.

The interpretation of the monument is hardly straightforward, especially given the lack of contemporary floor surfaces. Some observations are, however, possible. First, the orientation of the monument is quite different from those that occupy the rest of the promontory, which correspond more or less to that of the Roman town. This choice of orientation might have been

²⁴ The local character of the production of this group of amphorae has been elucidated by the discovery of a kiln producing them at Utica, associated with a ceramic dump: Ben Jerbania 2017.

²⁵ Lancel 1987, 110-11, pl. 14.

²⁶ For these two types Ricci 1973, 177-82 and Pavolini 1987, 142-3, fig. 1, 6A, 6B.

²⁷ It recalls closely the facies present in the abandonment layers of Valence, of 75 B.C.: Marín Jordá and Ribera Lacomba 2000.

conditioned by ritual considerations. Then, while the *signinum* floor with its dense, if haphazard, pattern of mosaic tesserae is not particularly luxurious, it seems a cut above the sort of floors one might expect to find in functional buildings such as *horrea*; although some sort of *macellum*-like structure might not be impossible, the plan does not correspond to any known examples. The plan and the size of the structure also seem to rule out a domestic space. Although the form of the porticoes which would have flanked the central building, and the rooms to the east are not paralleled elsewhere, a religious interpretation remains the most probable: we would be dealing with a temenos containing a central temple that measured 14.9 x 7.45 m, or approximately 50 x 25 RF, with a portico on either side. Two doors would have given access to the temenos. To the east, entered from the south end of the portico, was a line of rooms. The whole building would have faced the space later occupied by Lézine's 'Monument G', although it was probably separated from it by a wall, of which a stub has been located in the northeast corner of this later building.

If the monument's Roman measurements suggest builders who were used to working with these, this structure's form has no direct parallels. However, with its adjunct rooms, it reflects to some extent the neo-Punic temple complexes of the late Punic or very early Roman period, such as the third-century sanctuaries of Kerkouane, El Hofra at Cirta, or the sanctuary of Thinissut, near Siagu on the Gulf of Hammamet, built perhaps around the middle of the 2nd c. B.C.²⁸ In all these cases the temple is flanked by subsidiary spaces with different cult functions: some might have served as treasuries.

A Re-Examination of the Area to the South of the Early Forum

The Punic fortifications

To the south the picture is also now much clearer, thanks to cleaning and a close examination of the sections of the trenches excavated by Cintas in 1952. His aim was to excavate the earliest Phoenician tombs: other features escaped his attention.

The identification of a substantial wall to the north of Lézine's porticoed street, and a series of corings, have allowed us to demonstrate the existence of the defences of the Punic town,

²⁸ For Kerkouane, Fantar 2009; for El Hofra, Berthier and Charlier 1955; for Thinissut, Merlin 1910, and for its dating and discussion, Dridi and Sebaï 2008, 110. We are grateful to Stefan Ardeleanu for his comments.

probably dating to the 5th c. B.C. These are labelled on fig. 13 and comprised a rampart and, to the south of it, a huge ditch — probably measuring over 30 m in width and showing a similar size and technique to that at Lilybaeum.²⁹ This fortification affected the whole of the Roman town, its influence visible both in the reuse of the ditch for the porticoed street and also its orientation matching precisely with the later *insulae* of the expanded city. At an unknown date the rampart was leveled down to its lowest courses, and we can see reuse of its El Haouaria sandstone blocks in subsequent constructions across the site. In our area the earliest time this could have taken place would have been some point after the Civil War, during which Caesar describes the rampart as still standing.³⁰ It is thus not clear how long these original fortifications remained: the layer that covers it had no pottery that could be used for dating.

Structures between the rampart and the ditch

In 1952 the area of the ‘cimetière de l’île’ was linked to the area of the porticoed street by the excavation of a member of the École Française de Rome, E. Colozier, who dug a long, narrow trench between the two.³¹ Cleaning of this trench revealed that the earliest Roman stratigraphy recovered that we can date is the fill of a cut created at the edge of the ditch south of the Punic rampart at a time when it was no longer used, and perhaps already dismantled (fig. 10). This is a context extremely rich in pottery, which dates to the last quarter of the 1st c. B.C. The cut was dug for the insertion of a well-built, substantial drain. This was 0.80 m deep, walled by unplastered, thin slabs of sandstone set into the construction trench, with the gaps then filled by earth and rubble. It was covered with large, irregular stone slabs, loosely jointed. Two vertical stone slabs, above the level of the drain on the west end of the exposed sections seem to indicate the position of a downspout leading from a drain at a higher level.

Another element that seems to be related to the drain are the foundations of a wall two metres to the north of it: like the drain, its construction trench cuts the Punic berm, and the natural. The foundations run east–west, and are built of mortared rubble and small square blocks. The foundations are not as deep as the drain. No other structure seems to relate to this wall, and the contemporary ground surface has eroded away. An explanation for these two features could be the creation of a road running along the edge of the now-abandoned ditch, with the drain running down the middle. This would imply the existence of a second wall to the south of the

²⁹ Caruso 2008.

³⁰ Caes., *BCiv.* 2.25.

³¹ Colozier 1952.

drain which would have retained the scarp along the ditch edge. This road, aligned both with the Punic rampart and the Roman town, thus seems to represent the reordering of the ‘island’ in the Augustan period, the date of the pottery in the fill of the construction of the drain. Assuming that the drain ran down its centre, it would have been c. 5.20 m wide, very similar to the roads elsewhere in town, which measure 5.1 m or 10 Punic cubits.

Structures to the north of the rampart

The cleaning of Cintas’ trench north of the Punic rampart, where it expanded so that he could excavate the archaic cemetery, also revealed a number of structures that appear to have been related.³² These comprise a series of walls, a cistern, and a well; these are marked as ‘R’ on fig. 13, below. In the eastern section of his long extension to the north was a wall foundation (fig. 11). This was composed of a single course of large, rough blocks, sitting on top of a fill of small stones and lime: it was impossible to determine the depth of the foundation trench, nor the width of the wall, which ran under the section. The wall was cut at its north end by a later construction. At its south end it bonded to a stub of more regular masonry in small stones that projected slightly into the trench: its line is continued by a similar wall on the other side of the trench. After an interval of 1.65 m the wall terminated with a single, large flat block. This appears to have been the corner of a building, shown on fig. 12. Its return is indicated by a series of three blocks *in situ*, and a further four that have partially collapsed into the trench. Just north of this wall, and disappearing into the section, is a large cistern with a rounded end, built in mortared rubble. Razed at a later date, it is now just over a metre deep. To the east of it, 4 slabs of limestone set on end and forming a square give the characteristic shape of the late Punic and early Roman wells on the site. The two features clearly go together, and might be assumed to have occupied a courtyard within the building.

The interpretation of this building as a domestic structure seems the most probable. Although, as we shall see, it lies under a later temple precinct, an interpretation as an earlier temple runs up against the curiously-positioned cistern: while cisterns are not uncommon under temple porches, this one runs perpendicular to the façade, which is unparalleled. Then, the well, which clearly relates to it, would have no place underneath a temple or its steps. Thus we seem to be looking at a late-Punic or early-Roman house, built within the Punic rampart and aligned with

³² This cleaning first took place in 2013, when the French team directed by Y. Monchambert re-examined the Punic cemetery in the area, and then again in 2016, a cleaning that involved the whole area of the trench.

it, as well as with the layout of the Roman town to the south. The rampart may still have been standing at that time: the lack of blocks in the structure that resemble those of the rampart is notable here.

General assessment of the Augustan forum area (fig. 13)

The best-preserved part of the forum in the Augustan period is its eastern end, which consists of 'Exédre H' and 'Place J'. Here the use of *opus reticulatum* in the back wall of the portico and walls of the 'Exédre H' and the fact that these walls were revetted in marble show the high status of construction in the area, even in its early phase. The exact function of the exedra is not clear but the doors in its eastern and western walls show that it acted as a thoroughfare and might have been a monumental entranceway to structures located further uphill to the north-east. 'Place J,' with either U-shaped porticoes or porticoes flanking an arcaded terrace wall was clearly an elegant space. If it represents the original eastern end of the early forum then the length of this space, with 'Temple A' delineating its western end, would have been approximately 129.1 m.³³

We are much less clear about the northern and southern sides of the early forum. The new temple to the north is certainly the earliest structure in the complex, but it is not even sure that it was visible from the forum, as a stub wall running east-west may represent a continuous back wall, coinciding at some point with the little fountain ('Exédre F'). To the south, a final new element in our understanding of the forum area is the wall of a building which appears to continue the line of the southern edge of 'Place J'. This wall, marked Q on fig. 13, was entirely robbed out, but its north-south return was found in our excavations, cut by later structures. It appears to have turned to the east approximately along the line of the back wall of the later shops. The southern edge of the forum would thus have been relatively continuous, and its north-south measurement approximately 41.9 m, giving a total area of approximately 5410 m². The domestic structure (R) revealed in the northern extension of Cintas' trench lay to the south of whatever this structure was.

The creation of the forum thus seems to have been a gradual process. Key to our understanding of the whole is the razing of the previous structures. In the case of the new temple (P) this

³³ As the temple is set at an angle to the rest of the structures this figure is not exact. It could correspond to 400 of the Utican (Doric) foot, or, perhaps more likely, to 250 Punic cubits.

happened no later than 75 B.C., over a fairly wide area. Whether this coincided with the razing that then took place further south is an open question: certainly it would have been odd to find the new temple occupying a sort of hollow, so it seems probable that the general clearing of the forum area took place at this time, with the construction of 'Temple A' a couple of decades later. The more formal eastern end, comprising 'Exédre H' and 'Place J', may have been created as late as the Augustan period itself: the structures were now created on the same orientation as the new, post-Caesarian, city to the south. The wall running between Temple P and the forum space also follows this alignment, perhaps indicating that it too was an Augustan addition. We remain in the dark as to the location of the early basilica which must have existed in what was, after all, the provincial capital. By elimination, it should have occupied the south side of the space, where the robbed-out wall described above (Q) betrays the presence of now-lost buildings, but it is not impossible that it lay between the northern temple and the forum.

A Monumental Hadrianic Intervention ('Place N')

Lézine argues that in the middle of the 2nd c. A.D., the early forum was replaced by a *forum novum* at 'Place N' to the south, while over the early forum was built the huge structure with a granite colonnade, known in the 19th c. as the 'Dar Es Sultan' and labelled by Lézine as 'Monument G'. Our excavations have fleshed out this substantially correct view of the two new structures which, as a monumental ensemble, find clear parallels elsewhere in the Roman world (fig. 14). 'Monument G' is Antonine in date, and will be discussed in more detail below, but what Lézine identified as the new forum is Hadrianic. It is in this period that a complete re-design of central Utica commences.

This new forum, Lézine's 'Place N', occupies a broad stretch of level land punctuated by numerous previous excavations. It formed the first object of our enquiry, which attempted to make sense of the structures within it. The monument as a whole is enclosed by a thick wall, for which we have the foundations on the north, east, and south sides. On the north and south sides the foundations measure 1.88 m wide and are found at the bottom of substantial robber trenches just under 2 m deep (fig. 15). While these lower foundations are in concrete it is likely that their upper two metres were composed of blocks of El Haouaria sandstone, which were deemed worth robbing. The provenance of these blocks, almost certainly the Punic rampart, is not far away: possibly it was finally razed at this time. Roughly in the centre of the area enclosed by the walls, the earlier, domestic structure (R) discussed above was razed, together

with the cistern within it: its fill, excavated by the French team, contained pottery dating between the middle of the 1st and the middle of the 2nd c. A.D.³⁴

The exterior walls of this new complex enclose a space that measures 89.0 m x 54.6 m, or 300 x 186 RF: the ratio between the two sides is a golden section. An opening in the north wall is signalled by two paving stones visible in section at the edge of its robber trench: this may have been a double door, as the robber trench at this point seems to indicate the presence of a pier. Inside the walls on the north and south side are two well-built drains, lined with *opus signinum*. The southern drain is clearly intended to remove water from the space: it slopes away both to the east and the west from the centre of the complex, and bends to the south outside it. This exterior wall is lined by a portico on three sides — the north, east and west. Lézine identified porticoes on the north and south sides only.³⁵ He never explored the east and west sides, however, and in fact there is no trace of a portico on the south side, where the 1952 excavation trench gives a very clear view of the stratigraphy and confirms the absence of any corresponding robber trench. The clearest evidence for the portico comes from the northwest corner, where our excavation revealed a rather shallow robber trench, 1.15 m deep, with straight sides (fig. 16). This had been badly cut by medieval silos, but an irregular fragment of masonry preserved in the corner could be interpreted as what remains of the corner of the stylobate. The east–west robber trench continued west at a much higher level, presumably to tie the construction to the western wall of the enclosure. Time constraints made it impossible to empty the robber trench of the north–south stylobate, but a base was revealed at the south end of our excavation, which we interpret as the foundation for another column. The distance between the centres of these two foundations, 8.28 m, would give an interaxial of 2.76 m assuming two bases occupied the space between them: one of these is visible in the side of a later silo. The portico was paved with rectangular limestone slabs arranged in north-south rows of irregular sizes. Curiously, this pavement was laid directly on the soft, sandy natural soil of the site, which led to much breakage in the individual pavers.

³⁴ We are grateful to Marie De Jonge for kindly sharing the information on the forms recovered by the French team: these are – a plate with a bifid rim (mid 1st – mid 2nd c. A.D.): Hayes 1976- Carthage I, 98, C 18, fig. 15, no. 18; Fulford 1994, fig. 4.1 no. 1: a lid Fulford 1994: Fig 4.8 n°2 (mid 1st – mid 2nd c. A.D.); a lid Fulford 1994, fig 4.10 no. 25 (25 B.C. – A.D. 25): a lid Fulford 1994, fig. 4.8 no. 9.1 (first half of 1st c. A.D.); a lid Bonifay 2004, Type 45 (2nd c. A.D.)

³⁵ Lézine 1970, 63-4. He believed, mistakenly, that the north portico included the area of a paved street that we have demonstrated was created at the time of the ‘Monument G’ to the north. There is no evidence for a portico on the south side.

The final element of the complex, and one not remarked on by Lézine, is a masonry wall, 2.30 m wide, running east–west across the northern extension of Cintas’ trench (fig. 17). Followed to the west, in order to complete its plan, its corner was revealed 2 m beyond Cintas’ trench. The shape drawn on fig. 14 reflects this corner to the east of the central axis of the complex and indicates that the building had a front measuring approximately 31.0 m (or 105 RF). This can only be interpreted as the front wall of a very substantial structure, located centrally along the north side of ‘Place N’ and framed by the porticoes already mentioned. A temple is the most likely option. The masonry of this front wall alternates between heavy piers and lighter mortared rubble walling. This would seem to suggest a stylobate designed to support a colonnade, similar in construction to the façade of ‘Temple A’. However, the spacing of the piers relative to the corners of the wall, instead implies that any columns that it supported were spread evenly along its length and did not align with the piers within the lower part of the walling. The width (31 m) of the structure relative to its depth (approximately 25.4 m) would seem to suggest that this temple had a double *cella*. For the doors of these *cellae* to be framed between the columns of the façade rather than obscured by them, the temple must have been either octostyle or dodecastyle.³⁶ In the reconstructed plan in fig. 14 we have opted for the former, with a columnar order 9.95 m (ca. 34 RF) tall and an interaxial spacing between columns of 4 m (ca. 14 RF). The shafts in such a scheme would have been 8.3 m long or 28 RF. In a dodecastyle scheme columns of these dimensions would have been too closely spaced, while smaller columns would have resulted in a very squat façade. This reconstruction remains a hypothesis, and these architectural elements are of substantial dimensions, but the proportions of this octastyle colonnade, with a ratio of column shaft to interaxial spacing of c. 2:1, are the same as those of the porticoes surrounding the piazza

To the south of the front wall of this structure, 3.2 m away and preserved in the section of Cintas’ trench, is a line of rectangular blocks cut, like the wall, into the natural soil of the site.³⁷ These are aligned with the front wall, and lie at precisely the height of the paving of the portico in our excavations, which presumably corresponds to the ground level of the whole plaza. It seems possible to interpret this line as the foundation of the lowest step of the staircase leading up to the front wall. Other well-cut rectangular sandstone blocks are gathered just above Cintas’ trench, and it is tempting to interpret these as further steps, disturbed by his excavation. This

³⁶ Penelope Davies observes that a triple *cella* is also possible: however, none are known from in North Africa.

³⁷ These are visible on fig. 17, in the section beyond the wall.

staircase must have extended 3.4 m southwards, meaning that the podium was probably c. 2 m high and accessed by 10 steps. Wider than it is long, the shape of this temple seems to imply a double *cella*. It is certainly unusual but it not unparalleled in North Africa: at Lambaesis we find a temple on a wide podium dated to AD 247/8, with two *cellae* dedicated, respectively, to the Capitoline triad and the genius of the colony,³⁸ while at Leptis Magna the ‘Flavian Temple’ also has a double *cella*.³⁹

To the south of the porticoed ‘Place N’, and just under four metres below it, runs the porticoed street, 32.44 m between the façades of the boutiques and so just over 100 RF wide.⁴⁰ Here we cleared Cintas’ 1952 trench and excavated a section of the portico and one of the shops (fig. 18). It is notable that the lower portico of the street is paved with limestone slabs identical in their material and layout to those of the upper portico of the excavations in the northwest corner of the complex. The construction levels of the shop gave us good evidence for the date of the construction of the whole complex, with pottery which seems to date to the late Trajanic or early Hadrianic period.

The forms, identified by Paul Reynolds, include, from US 6095: an ITS cup base fragment, cf. Consp. 29 (Tiberian-Flavian); a Hayes 3B rim (fig. 19.1), cf. Hayes 3.22 (c. 75-150); a thin-walled early Hayes 197, small square rim (fig. 19.4). Cf. Hayes 1976, 72, Deposit XVI, no. 6, ‘2nd century A.D., probably Hadrianic’; an unslipped Tunisian lid rim in a fine fabric, the inner rim bevelled (fig. 19.6); a base of a Pompeian Red Ware dish, incised letters ‘C S’ under base; Sicilian Ostia III.464 (*Ostia III*, context IVC, pre- Hadrianic?) (fig. 19.7). From US 6097 there are an early Hayes 23B with a rolled, hooked rim band, the outer rim face slightly bevelled with an orange slip all over, the outer wall burnished in bands (fig. Fig. 19.2); if Hayes 23B starts in mid-2nd century, then the first third of the 2nd century?; a Hayes 23 base, the outer flange unusual, with a wide well-modelled, concave face, slipped inside only (fig. 19.3); a well-preserved precursor of Hayes 197 (fig. 19.5), cf. Hayes Deposit XVI,

³⁸ Eingartner 2005, 219-20 with previous bibliography; *CIL* VIII 18226-7 which dates it to 247/8. There was a temple with three *cellae* at Utica, referred to in *CIL* VIII, 1183 = *ILS* 05407; which was restored at some point after the creation of the colony: we have no idea where this inscription came from. Lézine (1968, 134-5) argues that this would have been a temple of Punic type, perhaps that described by Pliny (*NH* 16, 216).

³⁹ Eingartner 2005, 194-5 with previous bibliography; Brouquier Reddé 1992, 91-4; it dates to A.D. 93/4. Also at Leptis, the temple of the *Gens Septimia* is on a wide podium (Brouquier Reddé 1992, 95-6), as is that of Jupiter at Sabratha (Brouquier Reddé 1992, 31-5).

⁴⁰ Lézine 1968, 85.

no. 5, '2nd century A.D., probably Hadrianic' (Hayes 1976, 72), but ours has a rim top even more angled, not so close to Hayes 197: Trajanic?.

The back wall of the shops is cut into the hillside, and can certainly be interpreted as a retaining wall, rising perhaps two storeys high. It seems probable that a second storey of shops was raised above the first, opening onto the street that ran between the shops and the south wall of the sanctuary. This was a successor to the earlier road, and now measured 8.80 m (30 RF) wide. This street, and the upper level of the complex, must have been reached by stairs running up from the porticoed avenue, interrupting and framing the colonnade at both corners of the monument (see figs. 14 & 21). Entrances to 'Place N' from the street would have been through doors at the southern end of the eastern and western porticoes: a block protruding northward from the west end of the south wall may mark the edge of one of these entrances.

The south wall of 'Place N', which lacked a portico, remains problematic. Its foundations are just as wide and deep as that of the north wall, so a lighter structure seems unlikely. The most satisfactory option is a solid screen wall, perhaps decorated with a projecting order or engaged columns and punctuated by monumental doorways, similar in conception to the façade of Vespasian's Templum Pacis at Rome or the Library of Hadrian in Athens.⁴² The U-shaped portico surrounding the rest of the space probably had gabled roofs, considering its depth of 8.77 m, or just under 30 RF. Note that this width is a tenth of the whole width of the complex, which, unlike the layout of the Republican town, was clearly designed in Roman measurements, and with a Roman idea of proportions. Fragments of fluted Numidian marble (*giallo antico*) columns from the complex have diameters of 70 cm, suggesting column shafts c. 5.60 m high. Using an interaxial spacing of 2.76 m, derived from the excavated remains in the north-west corner of the complex, we can reconstruct the side porticoes as comprising 15 of these columns, with 6 on either side of the temple on the north side. With 42 columns in all, the use of Numidian marble is notable. Nothing remains to give us an idea of the capitals, although these were almost certainly Corinthian, like the fragment of a cornice found among building rubble and column shafts just outside the east wall of the complex (fig 20).

If the architectural details remain conjectural, the general aspect of the complex is not. From the main area of Utica to the south, which is found at much the same height as that of the

⁴² On the Templum Pacis, Tucci 2017; on the Library of Hadrian, Sisson 1929.

promontory, or ‘island’, one would have looked over the colonnaded street northwards towards a huge, terraced complex, facing the residential area of the town (fig. 21). The fact that the façade of the temple was partially hidden by the south wall would have been less of an issue from that vantage point, as the stairs would have framed the view and led the eye towards it. Much of the pediment would still have been visible and eventually ‘Monument G’ would rise behind the shoulder of the temple. The complexity of the structure reflects provincial terraced fora such as those of Tarraco and Augusta Emerita, and gave Utica, perhaps for the first time, a distinctive monumental focus visible from the south.⁴³

Although Lézine identified his ‘Place N’ as a new forum, the apparent lack of other structures within the complex, and the dominance of the central temple on the north side, makes it highly likely that its principle function was that of a sanctuary rather than a civic forum — the lack of a basilica within the complex seems to make the latter impossible. A clue to the nature of the sanctuary was discovered by Andrew Wilson. This is a passage from the *Chronica Gallica de 452*, which says, under the year 410: *Uticae in foro Traiani terra diebus septem mugitum dedit* (‘At Utica in the forum of Trajan the earth groaned for seven days’).⁴⁴ It seems plausible that this refers to our structure, the largest in the monumental centre. However, we should reflect for a moment what the phrase ‘*in foro Traiano*’ might actually mean in a 5th c. A.D. chronicle. Apart from Trajan’s Forum in Rome, no such structure is known from the empire. Indeed, Boatwright notes that his multiple benefactions to provincial towns are all of a very functional sort — roads and bridges rather than public monuments.⁴⁵ The construction of a forum, in a town in which one already exists, would at the very least be an exception to this rule. And yet its magnificence, not least in the massive use of Numidian marble, seems hard to imagine without a dose of imperial munificence. The complex finds obvious parallels in the two Traianeia, at Pergamon and Italica, both of which were built during Hadrian’s reign, the latter possibly as an imperial benefaction. The massive size of the Utican complex compares well with the Traianeum at Italica, which measures 107.60 x 80.10 m, although its plan is very different.⁴⁶ It can easily be imagined that a Traianeum might come, by the 5th c. A.D., to be referred to simply as a forum of Trajan. Finally, its date, judging from the material found in the

⁴³ On Tarraco: Dupré Raventos 1987; Aquilué Abadías 2004. On Augusta Emerita: Ayerbe Vêlez et al. 2009.

We may note that, in 123, Hadrian had visited Tarraco, where he rebuilt the temple to Augustus: SHA Had., 12.3.

⁴⁴ Mommsen 1894, 652: see for this earthquake Fentress and Wilson 2018.

⁴⁵ Boatwright 2002, 268-9.

⁴⁶ Léon 1988.

layers associated with the construction of the shops and the porticoed street, places it reasonably firmly in the Hadrianic period.

But what would have prompted Hadrian to donate — or encourage — such a structure? Certainly the antiquity of Utica would have appealed to him: as Boatwright points out, he had a predilection for towns with an ancient and noble past.⁴⁷ Some evidence comes from a statue base found somewhere nearby (the find spot is simply recorded as the ‘island’) whose text reads *Q(uinto) M[a]rc[i]o / Turbon[i] / praefecto / praetorii / d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)* (‘To Quintus Marcius Turbo, praetorian prefect, by the decree of the decurions with public money’).⁴⁸ Q. Marcius Turbo Fronto Publicius Severus was an important military and political player and a close friend of Hadrian. He was promoted by the emperor to Praetorian Prefect in A.D. 119, having previously served in Mauretania Caesariensis.⁴⁹ Although he was later persecuted by Hadrian,⁵⁰ we have no idea when this actually happened and his presence in Utica might easily be explained by the suggestion that he accompanied the emperor on his trip to Africa in A.D. 128: a perfect travelling companion in that he had already worked there. We know that Hadrian spent the first part of his trip at Carthage, and it is easy to imagine that he visited Utica.⁵¹ Indeed, the famous passage in Aulus Gellius in which the *Uticenses* request colonial status, and Hadrian expresses surprise at their desire to lose their municipal independence, seems to reflect a real conversation rather than an exchange of letters.⁵² Utica was indeed promoted to a colony in this period, taking the name of *colonia Iulia Aelia Hadriana Augusta Utika*. The role of Turbo in the process, for which the Uticenses expressed their gratitude with a statue, can only be guessed at; as Miletic and Bijadija remark, Turbo would certainly have been one of the more notable members of the emperor’s ‘powerful clique.’⁵³ We might note that the great house of the Julio-Claudian period that lies on the hill just east of the monumental centre – ‘the Maison du Grand Oecus’ – contained an inscription to a man who had fought under Trajan in the Dacian campaigns, earning 4 *hastae purae*.⁵⁴ Turbo, who had also served under Trajan in Dacia, is likely to have known him well, and thus been more than willing to support the civic ambitions of the town by pressing its case to the emperor.

⁴⁷ Boatwright 2000, 208.

⁴⁸ *AE* 1913, 164; *IL Afr* 421; *PIR* (2. Aufl.) M 249.

⁴⁹ SHA, *Hadr.* 6.7, 9.4. For Turbo, see Alföldy 1979, 238-250; Miletic and Bijadija 2014; SHA, *Hadr.* 4.1-2, 5.8

⁵⁰ SHA, *Hadr.* 15.7.

⁵¹ Birley 1997, 205.

⁵² Gell., *NA* 16.13.

⁵³ Miletic and Bijadija 2014, 326.

⁵⁴ *AE* 1964, 192; Veyne 1964.

Utica thus presented Hadrian with an opportunity to aggrandize his dynasty while embellishing the newly promoted *colonia*. If the temple did indeed have a double *cella*, we might surmise that it was dedicated either to Trajan and Plotina or, like the temple at Pergamon, with its two colossal statues, occupied by Trajan and Hadrian himself.⁵⁵

An Antonine Basilica ('Monument G')

The Hadrianic sanctuary complex radically transformed the civic centre of Utica, shifting the focal point of the promontory southwards away from the area of the earlier forum. But the changes did not stop here. The old forum, now side-lined, was built over and, as Lézine first noted, the structure that came to occupy it ('Monument G') was one of the grandest in the city. Nothing of the superstructure of this building remains standing, but three rows of parallel robber trenches along its southern and northern sides, and two rows along its eastern and western ends, mark the original lines of the its foundations (fig. 22). The inner line of foundations supported a colonnade, to judge from the large number of fragments of granite column shafts in the area. The middle line of foundations south and north as well as the exterior lines of foundations to the west and east supported solid walls. The most northerly and southerly foundations, finally, supported further lines of columns. Between these lines of robber trenches are the remains of mortar preparation surfaces bearing the traces of stripped-out paving and the occasional *in situ* limestone slab. In plan, therefore, we are looking at a core building comprising a rectangular central space surrounded on 4 sides by colonnades. The internal measurements of this core structure are 29.5 m x 52.5 m or 180 x 100 RF. An external portico ran along the south side and probably also the north side; including these porticoes, and the width of the walls, the footprint of the complex measures 54.9 m west–east by 43.5 m north–south, or c. 185 x 145 RF. The plan and dimensions of the structure indicate that we are dealing with the civil basilica of Utica. The Antonine basilica on the Byrsa at Carthage has a comparable plan, while the basilica at Meninx on Jerba, dated to the first half of the 2nd c. A.D., is also not dissimilar. The core of the Utica basilica is wider and slightly longer than the basilica at Meninx but considerably smaller than the basilicas at Carthage or the later Severan Basilica at Lepcis Magna.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ For the Traianeum at Pergamon, Nohlen 2017; Birley 1997, 166.

⁵⁶ Morton 2003; Gros 1985, 63.

More than 500 architectural elements were documented during the new excavations along sections of the south, east and west sides of the basilica. The bulk of these can be associated directly with this structure, though some elements from the neighbouring Hadrianic sanctuary were also recovered. These fragments allow the bulk of the architecture of the basilica to be reconstructed. The lower interior order and the order of the southern and northern exterior porticoes comprised shafts of both grey Troad and pink Aswan granite, ca. 5.92 m in height. These were combined with Corinthian bases and capitals in Prokonnesian marble, which brought the total order to a total of 7.10 m or exactly 24 RF. On the interior of the building, a second storey incorporated a smaller order of fluted shafts in yellow Numidian marble, ca. 3 m in height (Fig. 23). Pilaster orders containing fluted shafts again in Numidian marble ornamented the back walls of the interior and exterior colonnades on both storeys. The entablature elements of all of these orders are of the Romano-Carthaginian type and find close parallels in Antonine-era public architecture through Africa Proconsularis.⁵⁷

The floors of the nave, side aisles and exterior porticos of the basilica were paved with large slabs of greyish-white limestone. The substantial quantity of polychrome marble revetment recovered during the excavations of this building, however, suggests that no expense was spared for the decoration of its walls: 82% of the marble revetment catalogued during the new excavations at Utica was found here. Of the revetment panels recovered, 36% are in Numidian marble, while 17% are *serpentino*, 9% *porfido rosso*, and 8% *africano*. The striking quantities of Numidian marble in this complex echo the lavish display of this material in the Traianeum to the south.

A range of fragments of architectural sculpture also come from the excavations of the basilica. These finds include multiple fragments of standing figures, male and female, identifiable through their clothing as barbarians (fig. 24). The two largest fragments allow us to reconstruct the original height of these figures as c 2.5 m. The poses of the figures find close parallels among the Dacians from the Forum of Trajan but the clothing is closest to the depictions of eastern barbarians from the so-called Captives Façade at Corinth and the basilica at Meninx.⁵⁸ Whether Dacians or easterners — and without their heads their identification must remain open

⁵⁷ Pensabene 1986; 1989.

⁵⁸ For these parallels: Stillwell 1942, 74 fig. 50-51, 75; Schneider 1986, 128-30; Baratte 1995; Morton 2003, 61-9; Fentress *et al.* 2009, 143-5

— these were images of Roman conquest employing an accepted iconography celebrated not just in monumental building in the capital but at regional centres throughout the empire.

In addition to these standing figures, two busts were found during the excavations of the basilica, one male and one female. The male figure can be identified as Jupiter and the female is also probably a divinity. The complete male bust measures 60.5 cm high and 49.2 cm wide. The particular format of these busts is clearest in the case of the male one (fig. 25). They are wedge-shaped in profile and are made to be suspended rather than stood upright; instead of supports at their base they have projecting bosses on their rear sides. These bosses were design to slot into the centre of circular medallions, or *clipei*, numerous fragments of which were found by Lézine in this area but which have only now been identified as sculptural frames. To this sculptural series we can probably add the female bust, usually identified as Diana, found in 1904 and now in the Bardo.⁵⁹ This piece comes from central Utica, though exactly where is unclear. It is of nearly identical dimensions, 57 cm high by 47 cm wide, to the bust of Jupiter. Interestingly, Paul Gauckler proposed that rather than Diana the bust could represent a female of the Antonine dynasty; stylistically, a mid 2nd c. A.D. date is probably right, though the bust is not easily identifiable as any specific empress or princess.

All of the new sculptural elements were recovered from the southern robber trench of the basilica, in a fill dated to the early Medieval period. This find context suggests they belonged to the exterior and not the interior of the building and the obvious place for them to have been displayed is on an attic storey of the portico. The reconstruction in fig. 23 places the *clipei* between the barbarians, but it is also possible that the former were displayed on the back walls of the portico between the pilaster shafts. While images of subjugated peoples and *imagines clipeatae* are not unusual in public architecture, only a select number of structures combine them. In the Augustan phase of the Basilica Aemilia and in the Forum of Augustus, *imagines clipeatae* and standing figures — either caryatids or captives — are both incorporated into the attic zones of porticoes, the latter acting as frames for the former.⁶⁰ *Imagines clipeatae* and carvings of standing captives are again combined in the Forum of Trajan at Rome.⁶¹ At Mérida, the same arrangement is evident, while at Tarragona we find *clipei* framed by candelabra rather

⁵⁹ Initial report of this discovery by Paul Gauckler: *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires* 1904, 331-332; further discussion and a photograph is included in Colozier 1952, 75-76, pl. III.3-4.

⁶⁰ On the Forum of Augustus, Ungaro 1995, 46; Verzár-Bass 2017, 152-3 fig. 3; on the Basilica Aemilia, Coarelli 1985, 262-4, 296-8; Lipps 2011, 148 fig. 133.

⁶¹ Ungaro 2002.

than barbarians.⁶² In North Africa, images of barbarians are found on the exterior of the basilica at Meninx on Jerba and in the interior of the Severan Basilica at Leptis Magna.⁶³ The sculptural assemblage from the basilica at Utica consciously referenced these massive imperial projects at Rome and in provincial centres, echoing their themes of conquest and divine protection.

Overall, therefore, the sculpture and architectural decoration of the basilica would seem to place it in the middle of the 2nd c. A.D. This is also the date of the destruction of the complex to the north (Temple P), although, as they were separated by the old wall that delimited the north side of Augustan forum it is hard to see how the two are related, unless the area previously occupied by that complex took over some of the civic functions of the forum. This suggests that the basilica and the levelling of the area to the north was part of the second phase of the ambitious campaign of monumental urban renewal in the centre of Utica. The first phase of this work comprised the Traianeum and porticoed street. The basilica was then inserted to the north, on what we have proposed was the site of the earlier forum (Fig. 26). This had implications for other structures in this area, notably 'Temple A', which had previously opened on to the western end of the forum. Indeed it was probably at this point that the staircase of this temple was dismantled and a house with *opus sectile* floors (Lézine's 'Bâtiment B') was built into its south-eastern corner.⁶⁴ The façade of the temple might have stayed in place and acquired a different function but none of its architectural elements survive. Between the basilica and the northern edge of the Traianeum a new monumental road was built, paved in large slabs. East of the basilica, a row of shops, themselves decorated with *opus sectile* floors, opened on to this road. The Antonine architect of this new basilica had a fairly limited area in which to work, which probably explains the unusual proportions of the complex (which is shorter than Vitruvius recommends), but the elevated position of it with respect to the paved surface of the Traianeum suggest that the structure would have been one of the highest in the city centre, its façade and roof visible from all directions (as is clear on fig. 21).

Keeping up with Carthage?

Our work on the monumental centre of Utica, which occupies the promontory on which lay the Punic town, shows a steady eradication of previous structures on the site after the Caesarian

⁶² Trillmich 1990, 310-315; 2004, 328 fig. 11-12; Ensoli 1997, 164.

⁶³ On the Meninx barbarians, Baratte 1995; Morton 2003, 61-9; on the Lepcis examples, Ward-Perkins 1952.

⁶⁴ Lézine 1968, 94, 96.

period. The first step in this process was the razing of the whole area of the future forum, removing all trace of buildings later than the 4th c. B.C. The Punic rampart was probably levelled at this point, as we find its blocks in many of the new structures. The space was delimited by various buildings — ‘Temple A’, on a high podium to the west, the new Temple P to the north, an exedra and portico to the east and, to the south, a possible further monumental building (Q). Domestic occupation is evident to the east and south of the forum. In the Hadrianic period the massive sanctuary we propose to identify as a Traianeum was added, rising above a new porticoed street that occupied the depression of the Punic ditch. Finally, in the Antonine period, the space of the early forum was occupied by the new and magnificent basilica. Some awkwardness is visible in its placement vis-à-vis the Traianeum, while its construction required the razing of the old temple to the north, and the defunctionalization of ‘Temple A’.

It should be emphasized that in none of these phases are architects apparently working to a master plan: the Augustan forum seems to have resulted from an almost random accretion of buildings, while the Traianeum is built without apparent regard for previous structures. The basilica was inserted directly onto an existing forum, and has little formal relationship to the Traianeum besides its orientation.

In both the Augustan period and in the 2nd c. A.D. it appears that Utica was asserting what it regarded as its continued importance in the face of its resurgent local rival, Carthage, which replaced it as provincial capital from around the early 1st century A.D.⁶⁵ This is most obvious, of course, with the construction of a Traianeum under Hadrian, a building we propose should be added to those at Italica and Pergamon. His magnificent gesture towards the town — which probably included the construction of the whole of the porticoed street as well as the sanctuary — might have been stimulated by the opportunity the remains of the Punic ditch and the sharp terrace to the north of it offered to anyone with an architectural eye. Like that of Italica, it celebrated with an imperial cult building the promotion of the city to *colonia*. Like the others, it magnified the dynasty to which Hadrian himself belonged and, in so doing, drew attention both to his own piety and to his munificence. While there are many reasons why he might have wished to create an imperial sanctuary at Utica — its role as the second city in Africa

⁶⁵ The precise date at which Utica lost its position as capital is unknown, although Lézine notes the presence of the proconsul Domitius Ahenobarbus at Utica as late as 12 B.C. (1970, 31).

Proconsularis, its promotion to a colony — we have to look at it as well in terms of his relationship to the whole of North Africa. Nowhere more than Africa benefitted from his largesse. Fig. 27 shows Hadrianic promotions throughout the empire.⁶⁶ By far the greatest density is found in Africa Proconsularis. Although we do not have direct evidence for imperial investment in the Utican complex, imperial agency seems probable.

The same might be said for the later basilica. The quality of the decorative stones employed, and the nature of the sculpted decoration, demonstrate the planned magnificence of the building. More than just a display of wealth, the new basilica at Utica had an important practical function, in that as head of a *conventus* Utica was periodically the seat of provincial assizes held by the governor; Lepelley, in fact, explains the establishment of assizes at Utica as a sort of consolation prize for having been unseated by Carthage as capital of the province.⁶⁷ Some support for this role for the basilica is provided by an inscribed limestone base or altar measuring 52 x 41 cm, h. 45 cm, found near the semi-circular exedra (Lézine's 'Exèdre F'), just north-west of the corner of the building (fig. 28).⁶⁸ It reads, in letters 9 cm high,

/////

VCPROCPA.

The first line might preserve part of a name, though it would have to be highly abbreviated. The second line should be reconstructed as *v(ir) c(larissimus) proc(onsul) p(rovinciae) A(fricae)*. Although the abbreviation *proc* for 'proconsul' is very rare,⁶⁹ it might be explained by the limited space available and the context of the inscription. 'Procurator' is excluded by the senatorial rank of the dedicant, expressed by *v(ir) c(larissimus)*. The elongated letters suggest a date in the 3rd or 4th c. A.D., although the late 2nd c. A.D. is not impossible.⁷⁰ This would have been one of many inscriptions set up by a new proconsul in the basilica, perhaps during the occasion of the assizes.

When considering a further impetus for this complete monumental restructuring, we note that this new basilica at Utica belongs to the same period as two major construction projects at Carthage: the Byrsa basilica and the Antonine Baths.⁷¹ The former was the largest basilica in

⁶⁶ Lagogianni-Georgakarakosa and Papi 2018, 49; see also Boatwright 2000, 204-9.

⁶⁷ Lepelley 2001, 55-81. St. Cyprian was to be tried there in 257, but chose instead Carthage where he was bishop: Clarke 1989, 105-6 and 310-19.

⁶⁸ This might be the base mentioned in Lézine 1968, 102, though the text is not given here.

⁶⁹ An exception is found on *AE* 1930, 44 = *AE* 1082, 936 = *AE* 2001, 2065.

⁷⁰ We are grateful to Francois Chausson for this observation.

⁷¹ On the basilica, Gros 1985. On the Antonine baths, see Lézine 1969; Thébert 2003, 141-3.

North Africa and the latter the largest bath complex. And it is not just in their scale that these structures set a new standard. The Antonine Baths, in particular, make substantial use of monolithic columns in eastern granites. This helps us to understand the lavishness of the new basilica at Utica.⁷² As a structure, the basilica asserted Utica's continued position as the head of a *conventus* but through its building materials it also engaged directly with what was happening down the road in Carthage at the same date. The large-scale use of Aswan and Troad granite, combined with substantial quantities of *serpentino* and porphyry, show that the builders of the Utican basilica could draw on the same overseas supply networks of high-end materials, some of them imperially-controlled, as their Carthaginian contemporaries. The massive use of Numidian marble at Utica, which surpasses anything seen at Carthage, asserts the connections that existed between the city and the interior, accessible via the Medjerda. This conspicuous attempt at outdoing the scale and magnificence of Carthaginian construction projects might best be understood as a case of (friendly?) regional rivalry.

⁷² We also note the primary bath complex at Utica dates no earlier than the early 2nd c. A.D. and most likely dates to some point in the mid to late 2nd c. A.D. (Lézine 1968, 141-6; Thébert 2003, 186). We know relatively little about this structure, but the similarity between its proposed chronology and the Antonine Baths marks yet another instance of construction at Utica responding directly to developments at Carthage.